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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
12 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Current Soviet Role in the Middle East Crisis

Summary

The USSR's principal current objectives in the Middle East situation remain those of maintaining the cease-fire and avoiding a confrontation with the West. The Soviets' diplomatic and political posture in the crisis has stiffened, however, in the last two days. There is no evidence that their military dispositions have changed accordingly, but our evidence may be incomplete or delayed. They have made a number of gestures designed in part to placate the Arabs, with whom their prestige and influence have at least temporarily declined. Any intensive or sustained Soviet efforts in their direction, however, probably will have to await a thorough assessment of the permanent damage, if any, that their position in the region has suffered. Meanwhile, modest deliveries of Soviet arms to Middle Eastern clients are continuing, partly for public relations effect and partly to restore at least a minimal air-defense capability to Egypt.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared jointly by the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of Research and Reports, and was discussed with analysts of the Office of Na-

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The Soviet Position in the Middle East

1. The Soviet threat to take sanctions against Israel has the twofold purpose of keeping pressure on the Israeli Government for the maintenance of the cease-fire and appeasing Arab demands for more resolute action by "Eastern bloc states." The immediate aim of the Soviets is to maintain the cease-fire which they were instrumental in achieving even at the risk of Arab dissatisfaction. [REDACTED]

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2. Recent Soviet steps against Israel reflect the concern of the Soviets over the weakness of their position in the Middle East. Fedorenko's statements in the UN and the reports in Soviet propaganda media continue to follow the Arab line and to charge Israel with aggression. Also, Moscow, linking the US with the Israeli position, has condemned US policy as defending aggression and ignoring the rights of the victims of that aggression. The hasty convocation of the Communist "summit meeting" and the USSR's subsequent breaking of relations with Israel are further indications of Moscow's efforts to regain favor with the Arabs. These measures are still little more than gestures, although they pre-
sage an intensified bid to refurbish the Soviet image with the Arabs.

3. Moscow remains determined to avoid a military confrontation with the West. Kosygin's refusal to accept the UAR ambassador's charges of US intervention on behalf of Israel was tantamount to calling Nasir's emissary a liar. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Nevertheless, there is the possibility that Moscow will seek to make its verbal escalation more credible. If so, however, any direct Soviet involvement will be carefully designed to minimize the risks of confrontation with the West.

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